

# ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

1. **DNR recommends following EPA regs to clean up after the flood**
2. **Flood clean-up information available on DNR website**

## **DNR RECOMMENDS FOLLOWING EPA REGS FOR BUILDING CLEAN-UP AFTER FLOODS**

DES MOINES – While tornados and flooding can cause the loss of property, correctly caring for asbestos during clean-up efforts can help avoid a greater public health hazard according to the DNR.

“It’s a very trying time for Iowans, but we should remain mindful of the health impacts of open burning,” said Barb Lynch, DNR field office chief.

“Open burning of tree and wood products is permitted in declared disaster areas, but to prevent demolished buildings from becoming a threat to public health we recommend that they be land filled because of the high likelihood of asbestos contamination,” said Catherine Fitzsimmons, chief of DNR air quality.

If the asbestos material can be separated from the partially demolished buildings the remainder of the building can be burned, Fitzsimmons said.

It is difficult to do an adequate asbestos clean-up after the buildings are damaged, and federal law does not exempt people from having to dispose of disaster waste properly.

“We’re asking individuals to make a significant effort to remove asbestos materials, keep them wet and take them to a landfill where they can be disposed of properly,” Fitzsimmons said.

Most homes contain some asbestos fibers since it’s frequently been added to building products and is still being used in construction. It is most commonly found in the transite siding that

was popular during the 1950s, pipe wrap and some asphalt shingles, although it has been incorporated into 3600 different products, including floor tiles.

Fitzsimmons said that asbestos is a known carcinogen that contributes to lung inflammation and disease when the fibers are released to the air through burning.

The DNR recommends following U.S. EPA's guidance for catastrophic emergencies listed below, including removing asbestos from debris and disposing of it in landfills as asbestos-contaminated debris.

- Buildings destroyed by tornados, high winds, etc. are considered to be demolished by natural causes and notification requirements are waived.
- A trained person should identify materials suspected of containing asbestos. When a structure is demolished by a natural disaster, a significant part of the materials can be contaminated by asbestos fibers.
- Asbestos removal contractors are not required for the cleanup; however, wetting and proper disposal of asbestos-containing material is required. The material should be put in a landfill as asbestos-containing waste to assure that it is not inadvertently disturbed at a later time.
- Remaining uncontaminated building debris can be disposed of in accordance with solid waste regulations.
- Open burning is permitted in the disaster area to clear trees and wood products without using landfills.
- Partially destroyed buildings can be demolished without notifications after asbestos materials are removed by abatement contractors. If the building is unsafe for the abatement contractors it is considered to be destroyed and materials may be removed as described in the first bullet above.

For commercial and public buildings and apartments with five or more units, the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants or NESHAP regulations should be followed.

More information can be found on the DNR Web site at [www.iowadnr.com/spills/flood.pdf](http://www.iowadnr.com/spills/flood.pdf) or [www.iowacleanair.com](http://www.iowacleanair.com).

DNR field offices can provide additional information. Field offices are located in Manchester, Mason City, Spencer, Atlantic, Des Moines and Washington.

**Media contact: For more information, contact Catharine Fitzsimmons at 515-281-8034 or Barb Lynch at 712-262-4177.**

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## **DNR PROVIDES FLOOD CLEAN-UP INFORMATION**

DES MOINES – From sandbag disposal to pesticide disposal, the DNR has posted a Web site guide to flood clean-up information from the environmental standpoint.

“We want to make sure that folks aren’t accidentally or inadvertently exposed to hazards as they begin cleaning up flood and tornado damage,” said Kathy Lee, from the DNR emergency response unit.

The DNR guide can help people and communities avoid creating hazards, too, as they make decisions about waste disposal, she added.

The guide is available from the DNR Web site at [www.iowadnr.com/spills/flood.pdf](http://www.iowadnr.com/spills/flood.pdf).

**For more information, contact Kathy Lee at 515-725-0384.**